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The Associated Students of the University of Montana
Resolution Regarding FY17 Budget Cuts
December 9th, 2015
SB31-15/16

Authored by: Samuel K. Forstag, ASUM Senator; Cody Meixner, ASUM President;
Sponsored by:

Whereas, The University of Montana (UM) Mountain Campus has experienced a significant decline in enrollment of 18.5% since Fall of 2009¹;

Whereas, UM's mission, as stated in the University Mission Statement, is to pursue academic excellence "as demonstrated by the quality of curriculum, student performance, and faculty professional accomplishments"²;

Whereas, the long-term success of UM depends largely on following through on our commitment to "providing unique educational experience," as laid out in the University Mission Statement²;

Whereas, UM has a continued interest and responsibility to ensure that we do not decrease our investments in the liberal arts at a level that is disproportionate to those programs' declines in enrollment;

Whereas, declining enrollment in the eight (8) Mountain Campus programs that have been slated for cuts (Anthropology, English, Geography, Liberal Studies, Political Science, Art, Forestry, and Journalism) accounts for approximately 39% of losses in enrollment over the past six years¹;

Whereas, declines in enrollment within the College of Humanities and Sciences' 28 majors account for approximately 34.7% of losses in enrollment over the past six (6) years¹;

Whereas, declines in enrollment within the School of Business and Administration's five (5) majors account for approximately 19.5% of losses in enrollment over the past six (6) years¹;

Whereas, declines in enrollment within the School of Visual and Performing Arts' five (5) majors account for approximately 4.3% of losses in enrollment over the past six (6) years¹;

Whereas, declines in enrollment at the School of Journalism account for about 9% of lost enrollment over the past six (6) years¹;

Whereas, declining enrollment has been seen across the Montana University System (MUS), with enrollment drops in 11 out of 15 MUS campuses and an overall decline of about 2.1%³;

¹ Missoulian, Enrollments by Department at UM: Fall 2009-15, http://missoulian.com/enrollments-by-department-at-um-fall/pdf_cdfc151f-ff7a-5e56-a2cc-1c8edf4f5a21.html

² University of Montana Mission Statements, <http://www.umt.edu/president/mission.php>

³ Montana Board of Regents, Fall 2015 Census Enrollment Report, <https://mus.edu/board/meetings/2015/Nov2015/BOR%20Enrollment%20Update%20-%20Fall%202015%20Census.pdf>

Whereas, the past six (6) years' enrollment declines necessitate cost-saving measures that must include, to some extent, laying off some members of UM faculty and staff and closing some open faculty and staff lines;

Whereas, decisions made by the UM administrators involved with oversight of enrollment and recruitment efforts contributed to the past six (6) years' decline in enrollment;

Whereas, the President of the University bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the institution's academic success as well as financial solvency;

Whereas, a continued, strong commitment to the liberal arts is essential to the mission and identity of UM;

Whereas, President Engstrom's presentation at the Campus Budget Forum on November 17th designated five (5) strategic areas for future investment and growth: (1) Healthcare and Human Development, (2) Data and Computational Science, (3) Business and Entrepreneurship, (4) Ecology and the Environment, (5) Workforce-Specific Programs;

Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) urges that any cost-saving measures that affect academic departments be proportionate to those programs' enrollment declines over the past six (6) years;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM insists that the impacts many programs have already experienced from unfilled faculty and staff positions be considered in the distribution of budget cuts across departments;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM urges UM President Royce Engstrom to clarify the University's commitment to those programs, which he stated were, "essential to our mission and identity" by including liberal arts programming among the Strategic Areas for Growth that were listed in the Campus Budget Forum presentation;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM requests that the administration increase the transparency of the 'right-sizing' process by clarifying any outstanding factors which the administration intends to consider in the elimination, consolidation, or reduction of programs at UM, apart from declines in departmental and programmatic enrollment;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM asks that student evaluations play a chief role in any decisions within departments as to which faculty members will be retained or laid off;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM encourages the UM administration to work with ASUM, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate to seek and approve alternative cost-saving measures, such as across-the-board or selective furloughs, adjusting class sizes, early retirement incentives, and the withholding of bonuses and performance pay;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM requests that any effort to ‘right-size’ UM’s budget include substantive actions reflecting the administration’s ultimate responsibility for the current budget shortfall;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, ASUM requests an audit of the effectiveness of the specific departments and employees who may be responsible for UM’s enrollment, recruitment, and retention efforts, including, but not limited to: Office for Integrated Communications; Office of Admissions; New Student Services; Enrollment Services; Financial Aid Office; Registrar’s Office; the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, that ASUM encourages responsible administrators to decline any performance-based bonuses, as an act of solidarity, accountability, and shared commitment to overcoming UM’s current budgetary challenges;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, that ASUM calls upon the Montana Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education to assist UM in its current struggles by making this issue their top priority and aiding President Engstrom and his leadership team in the coordination of modern, competitive recruitment and enrollment strategies;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, that ASUM calls upon the Montana Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education to assist UM by instituting the substantive changes needed to ensure the continued success and financial solvency of UM as Montana’s flagship liberal arts and research university;

Therefore, Let It Further Be Resolved, this resolution shall be sent to: Royce Engstrom, President of the University of Montana; Perry Brown, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Mike Reid, Vice President for Administration and Finance; Teresa Branch, Vice President for Student Affairs; Peggy Kuhr, Vice President for Integrated Communications; Scott Whittenburg, Vice President for Research and Creative Scholarship; Bill Borrie, Chair of Faculty Senate; Jennifer Zellmer-Cuaresma, President of Staff Senate; Steve Bullock, Governor of the State of Montana; Denise Juneau, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Clay Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education; Paul Tuss, Chair of the Board of Regents; Fran Albrecht, Vice Chair of the Board of Regents; Asa Hohman, Student Regent; William Johnstone, Regent; Robert Nystuen, Regent; Martha Sheehy, Regent; Jed Liston, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment; Sharon O’Hare, Associate Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success.

Passed by Committee: _____, 2015

Passed by ASUM Senate: _____, 2015

Katie Hopingardner
Chair, Resolutions & Affairs

Betsy Story
Chair of the Senate